

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend claims 1, 9 and 14, and cancel claim 3 and 13. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:  
a gear box mounted to a mower deck of a riding mower, the gear box positioned between the mower deck and an operator platform and having a one-piece low-profile housing with a bottom having an opening with a first collar, four sides, and an at least partially open top, a cover over the at least partially open top having an internal recess and a second an inwardly facing collar, an input shaft having a terminal end inserted through an opening in one of the sides, an output shaft perpendicular to the input shaft inserted through the an opening in the bottom and having an a first end adjacent the top, a first roller bearing positioned in the first collar around the output shaft, a second first roller bearing positioned in the second collar around the first end of the output shaft, a first spiral bevel gear attached to the terminal end of the input shaft adjacent the opening through which the terminal end is inserted, the internal recess dimensioned to provide adequate clearance for the first spiral bevel gear, and a second spiral bevel gear attached to the output shaft and being engageable with the first spiral bevel gear, the input shaft having an axis, the measurement from the axis of the input shaft to the bottom of the housing being greater than the measurement from the axis of the input shaft to the cover.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the input shaft has a generally horizontal axis and the output shaft has a generally vertical axis.
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising threaded fasteners connecting the cover to the housing.
5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a rotary cutting blade mounted to the output shaft.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a pulley mounted to the output shaft, and a belt wound around the pulley turning a plurality of rotary cutting blades mounted on vertical shafts.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the input shaft is connected to a transmission.

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:  
a riding mower having an engine, a mower deck under which at least one rotary cutting blade is positioned to rotate, and a platform having an operator seat over the mower deck;  
an input shaft having a generally horizontal axis operably connected to the engine, and an output shaft having a generally vertical axis shaft having a first end and a second end, the second end connected to the at least one rotary cutting blade; and a gear box having a housing positioned between the mower deck and the platform, the housing having an internal volume containing a first spiral bevel gear mounted to the input shaft and a second spiral bevel gear mounted to the output shaft and meshed with the first spiral bevel gear; the housing having a bottom with an opening and a collar receiving and positioning a first roller bearing to rotatably support the output shaft between the first and second ends; the housing having a removable cover with a an inwardly extending collar receiving and positioning a second roller bearing to rotatably support the first end of the output shaft and an internal recess dimensioned to provide adequate clearance space for the first spiral bevel gear; the internal volume below the generally horizontal axis of the input shaft being greater than the internal volume above the generally horizontal axis of the input shaft.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

a riding mower having an operator platform over a mower deck, an engine, a transmission connected to the engine, and a generally horizontal shaft extending from the transmission, the generally horizontal shaft having a first end and a second end;

a rotary cutting blade under the mower deck and having a generally vertical shaft attached thereto, the generally vertical shaft having a first end and a second end; and

a gear box having a top surface and a bottom surface, the gear box positioned between the mower deck and operator platform and enclosing the first end of the generally horizontal shaft and the first end of the generally vertical shaft, the generally vertical shaft extending through the bottom surface of the gear box, the gear box housing a pair of spiral bevel gears to change the transmitting direction from the generally horizontal shaft to the generally vertical shaft, the housing having a collar at the bottom surface for receiving and positioning a first roller bearing to rotatably support the generally vertical shaft extending through the opening between the first and second ends of the shaft, the housing having a cover with a an inwardly extending collar for receiving and positioning a second roller bearing to rotatably support the first end of the generally vertical shaft and an internal recess dimensioned to provide adequate clearance space for the spiral bevel gear on the generally horizontal shaft; the measurement from the generally horizontal shaft to the bottom surface of the gear box being greater than the measurement from the generally horizontal shaft to the top surface of the gear box.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 further comprising a pulley connected to the generally vertical shaft, and a belt wound around the pulley to turn a plurality of rotary cutting blades.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 14 further comprising an operator seat mounted on the operator platform.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the top surface of the gear box comprises a cover attached thereto with threaded fasteners.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the pair of spiral bevel gears have different diameters.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the generally vertical shaft has a first section with a different diameter than the second section.